

Social Science Federation Column

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Executive Director

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In this, the first column of the academic year, I would like to wish all of you a most productive and fruitful year. Over the summer, the SSFC has been busy monitoring government policies and initiating action to alert our community to the potential impact of social science research in Canada.

Following the Federal budget, the SSFC initiated a lobbying campaign against proposed cuts to the postal subsidy programme which presently reduces the costs of disseminating scholarly journals. The members of the Federation, the National Lobbying Network and over 200 journal editors in Canada were invited to write the Minister of Communications, Marcel Masse to oppose the cuts. In July, SSFC met with representatives of the Department of Communications (DOC) to explain the necessity of a strong postal subsidy for the survival of the learned journals. A number of journal editors have provided the DOC with current mailing costs of journals to illustrate the impact that a reduction in the postal subsidy would have on the dissemination of research in Canada.

The government timetable for how and where the cuts to the postal subsidy should be made is as follows; DOC

officials present their recommendations to the Minister on August 24, 1989; Marcel Masse will make a general announcement concerning the reduction in September; and the final details will be made public in early October. The SSFC is monitoring this situation and will keep you informed.

The SSFC is concerned that the Goods and Services Tax (GST) will have a potential negative impact on the cost of research, journals and books. A study by Woods Gordon commissioned by "The Don't Tax Reading" coalition shows that the new tax, scheduled to come into effect in January 1991, would substantially raise the price of books, magazines and journals which are presently largely exempt from commodity taxes. Most countries who have adopted the Value Added Tax, have chosen to exempt books and magazines from the tax. The tax on text books and on the production costs of journals compounded by the current threat to the postal subsidy programme and the insufficient budget of the SSHRC will have an adverse effect on the advancement and dissemination of knowledge in Canada. SSFC has written a letter to Michael Wilson expressing its concern, as well as making officials in Finance and DOC aware of these problems.

The technical paper on the GST issued

by the Department of Finance is being reviewed by the Federation with a view to assessing the real impact on scholarly publishing and to developing a strategy to pressure government to exempt books and journals from the tax. Other potential effects of the GST on universities and research in general are being studied by the Federation.

SSFC is also encouraging the government to proceed with the implementation of phase two of the copyright legislation and look forward to some movement in this area during the coming months.

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Baha Abu-Laban from the University of Alberta has accepted to chair the National Lobbying Network of the Federation. The NLN was created to assist the SSFC in its lobbying activities and to help raise the Federation's visibility on Parliament Hill and in the MP's local constituencies. The National Lobbying Network which was established last fall consists of ten other representatives from our research community. Each member of the NLN has established a regular and ongoing dialogue with a member of parliament to further share concerns on the above. The Network will meet again in December 1989.

The Women's Issues Network which has recently been established by the SSFC will be holding its first meeting on September 22 in Ottawa. The Network is comprised of one representative from each member association. The first meeting will allow participants to discuss issues of concern to women in the social sciences and to make recommendations to the SSFC Board of Directors. SSFC is pleased to announce the publication of *Getting the word out: communicating feminist research* edited by SSFC President Caroline Andrew and published by the University of Ottawa Press.

The Annual General Meeting of the SSFC will be held in Ottawa, October 12 and 13, 1989 during which time members will have an opportunity to meet with senior representatives from SSHRC and the Ministry of the Secretary of State. We have a full and informative program planned for these meetings and look forward to bringing our representatives up to date on the many other government projects and the SSFC activities on your behalf.

CONFERENCES

The French Revolution and French Canada, Ottawa, November 15-17, 1989.

This multi-disciplinary conference is organized by Le Centre de recherche sur la civilisation canadienne-française de l'Université d'Ottawa and focuses on the following themes: the state, the nation, society and the heritage of the French Revolution; revolutionary and liberal discourse in French Canada; reactions in France and in Canada; the Revolution and the idea of rights; the Revolution and the imagination. There will also be two round tables on *The French Revolution in Lower Canada: Myth or Reality?* and *Collective Rights vs. Individual Rights, an Impasse?* For registration contact: Sylvain Simard, organising committee chairperson at (613) 564-4016 or Francine Dufort Thérien at (613) 564-2206.

The Sixth Kingston Conference on the History of Science and Technology at the Donald Gordon Centre, **Queen's University, Kingston, October 13-15, 1989.** Programmes and registration from: Dr. R. Jarrell, Department of Science Studies, Atkinson College, York University, North York, Ont., M3J 1P3; (416) 736-5213.

A World Conference on Ethical Choice in the Age of Pervasive Technology, Guelph University, Guelph, October 25-29, 1989. For information: University School of Continuing Education, Guelph, Ont. Tel. (519) 824-4120 ext. 3956.